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CHAIRWOMAN MIKULSKI STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF ENDING SEQUESTER AND FOCUSES ON ELIMINATING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY AT DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON FY14 AIR FORCE BUDGET REQUEST

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the full Senate Appropriations Committee, today discussed the necessity of having a military that is free of the fear of sexual assault at the Defense subcommittee hearing on the fiscal year 2014 budget request of the Air Force. The Chairwoman again expressed her support for the President's budget request level of \$1.058 trillion for discretionary spending. The following are Chairwoman Mikulski's remarks, as prepared for delivery:

"Thank you, Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Cochran for your leadership of the Defense Subcommittee. And thank you, Secretary Donley and General Welsh for your commitment to our troops and to our nation's security, and for your leadership in confronting tough budget concerns. The two of you bring much needed continuity to the Pentagon in a challenging time. I know you have both devoted your lives to serving our country, and we all appreciate your dedication and service.

"The resources provided in this bill are so important -- they touch the lives of our men and women in uniform and all Americans. That is why I support the President's budget request level of \$1.058 trillion for discretionary programs, the same as the deal we made three months ago in the American Taxpayer Relief Act. That bill passed the Senate by a vote of 89 to 8 just four months ago. A deal should be a deal. In contrast, the Ryan budget and sequester level would be \$966 billion, which is \$91 billion less than the President's request. We need a balanced approach to end sequester, including revenues and targeted spending cuts.

"I want to thank Secretary Donley for including \$76.2 million in the fiscal year 2014 request for an Ambulatory Care Center at Andrews Air Force Base. Our troops, and their families, deserve this support.

"Our troops also deserve a military free of sexual assault and scandal I am frustrated with the way the Air Force has handled this issue. As we speak, Colonel Wilkerson is under investigation for another allegation of sexual misconduct. This follows General Franklin reinstating Wilkerson, after being found guilty of rape by a jury of his peers. I note that five former Commanders at Lackland Air Force Base have now been punished, and that 17 instructors have been charged with sexual assault on their watch. The charges range from sexual harassment to rape.

"The Air Force clearly needs some outside help. This was even more clear to me by the events of this weekend. A person tasked to combat sexual assault was himself charged with sexual battery. A culture within the Air Force finds these activities acceptable. However, this problem is not the Air Force's alone. The Department of Defense estimates that 26,000 sexual assaults occur per year. And yet of that number, only 1,108 were reported. Of those that were reported, 575 were processed and 96 went to court-martial.

"A March 2011 survey revealed that one in five service women say they have been sexually assaulted since joining the service. The same survey tells us that 50 percent of female airmen who were raped didn't report it. The reason: they 'didn't want to cause trouble.' This Committee will work to ensure that this does not happen again."

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